

Approved - Wheaton Redevelopment Advisory Committee
May 26, 2010
Mid-County Regional Services – 2424 Reddie Drive Wheaton, MD 20902

Members Present, Gregory Baker; Melissa Brown; Maureen Carrington; Eleanor Duckett; Jonathan Fink; Diane Lynne; Thomas; Martin; Susan Petersen; Morey Rothberg; Dave Taghipour and Fran Ware

Members Absent: Mara Baer; Elizabeth Boyle; Filippo Leo; Rahman Harrison; Manuel Hidalgo; Zoe Lefkowitz; Chris Lindsay; Erin Roberts; and Robert Schilke

County Staff Present: Gary Stith; Pete McGinnity; and Rob Klein

Guest Speaker: Sandra Tallant, Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission

Guests: Judy Cioffi; Terry Meek; Karen Cordry; John Jenkins; Keith Capp and Dan Sheveiko

Meeting Called to Order by Chairperson Greg Baker at 7:00 p.m.

Approval of Minutes – Motion to approve the April minutes made by Mr. Martin and seconded by Ms. Carrington. Minutes were approved. (Last month Mr. Rothberg voted in favor of the BB&T Bank Project. After further consideration, Mr. Rothberg wishes to abstain as he feels there may be a conflict of interest).

Sector Plan Update and Process by Ms. Tallant

- Staff Draft of the Sector Plan should be on the web site by May 28. The Redevelopment staff will provide the WRAC members with the web site link. The draft will be presented to the Planning Board on June 3rd at which time the Planning Board could recommend the plan be prepared for a public hearing or ask the staff to come back the following week with additional information. The public hearing will be in July.
- Work sessions will begin in September. The work sessions are open to the public.
- The Plan will be transmitted to the County Council in late October. Due to the election, the Council will not take up the Sector Plan until after the first of the year.
- There are no real changes in the document.
- The process will take a year to a year and a half. There is a lot of opportunity to be part of this process.

Request for Qualifications by Mr. Stith

- Proposals are being reviewed for Lot 14 on Blueridge Avenue and the core area Lot 13 and WMATA property. Interviews have been held with the development teams.

The Qualification Selection Committee hopes to get their recommendations to the County Executive by next month so the Executive can select a development partner(s). Next in the process is a letter of intent with the developer(s). In September, the developer(s) will begin meeting with the WRAC Committee to get your ideas and go through a possible Charette process. Charettes have been done for various projects and is a good technique in getting community participation in the design process.

- The committee discussed how they might work with the developer i.e. as a whole committee or as subcommittees. Mr. Baker suggested that the full WRAC Committee initially meet with the developer(s) and as the developer(s) gets more project specific things may be handled by the various subcommittees.
- Mr. Baker suggested the committee might want to use this time to summarize previous reports so members can use that information once they begin meeting with the developer(s).

Costco Fueling Station – Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) 10-04

- Mr. Baker recapped background information provided at previous WRAC meetings. Several committees have written letters. WUDAC voted in favor, MCCAB voted against, and the Town of Kensington Council voted in favor. The ZTA is to be forwarded to the PHED Committee following the County Council public hearing.
- WRAC's position, as well as that of the Project Review Subcommittee, has been to support Costco. The Committee is aware of Kensington Heights Citizens Association (KHCA) concerns. The committee is recommending the County Executive engage KHCA in discussions even if the ZTA is pursued. This is an opportunity to promote a green building and design. There was more debate between the members on the subject of the ZTA, the special exception and the issues involved with the gas station.
- There is still an opportunity to add language and feedback to the Zoning Text Amendment. The WRAC prepared a letter to the Council in support of ZTA 10-04.
- ZTA's are approved by PHED recommendations and the County Council.

MOTION by Mr. Baker and seconded by Mr. Fink to –

Approve the WRAC letter in support of the ZTA 10-04 and forward it to the County Council. The Motion passed with Lynn and Duckett opposed, zero abstentions and the following members in favor: Baker, Brown, Carrington, Fink, Martin, Petersen, Rothberg, Taghipour and Ware

WRAC Interviews

- There will be six vacancies on the WRAC Committee. A significant amount of outreach was done to recruit new members including distribution of a flyer, Taste of Wheaton, emails, etc. The outreach efforts were successful as there are fifteen applications so far (three business and twelve residential). The closing date is today, May 26th. The next step is to form an interview committee.

- At an Executive Committee meeting, Ms. Petersen, Ms. Lynne and Mr. Baker were nominated to participate on the interview committee. Tonight, Mr. Baker asked if others were interested. There being none, the three individuals accepted. The interview committee will select a date and Mr. McGinnity will contact the applicants to schedule their interviews. It is anticipated interviews will be held in late June.

Redevelopment Report by Mr. Stith

- He thanked everyone that volunteered at the Redevelopment booth during the Taste of Wheaton.
- Safeway will hold another public meeting on June 7 at 7:00 pm at Crossway Community, Inc. The public hearing is required prior to submitting a site plan. This is the last step in the approval of that project. Next, they will finish their construction drawings and apply for a building permit.
- Mr. Baker spoke previously with Mr. Klein, and requested staff prepare a one-page matrix listing all the projects in the pipeline showing the last milestone and the next milestone.
- Mr. Baker joined the Governor and Delegate Al Carr on April 15 in the signing of House Bill 861 regarding the Enterprise Zone Tax Credit Program which WRAC supported.
- BB&T will go to the Planning Board on July 22 to request an amendment to the schematic Development Plan to proceed with their project. Next, BB&T will meet with the County Hearing Examiner on September 24.
- Washington Property will go to the Planning Board on July 22 to request an amendment to the schematic Development Plan to proceed with their project. Next, Washington Property will meet with the County Hearing Examiner on July 30.
- The Capital Projects are moving forward this spring and summer.
- The Gilchrist Center will move to the Mid-County Regional Center the end of June. The mosaic mural on the front of that building will be relocated to the Pedestrian Walkway. Arts on the Block worked with local students on design and implementation of the mural.
- Mr. Stith announced his retirement effective July 16. Mr. Dise is looking to fill the position as soon as possible.

General Assembly Session – Mr. Klein reported on bills in the latest legislative session that may benefit Wheaton's redevelopment.

HB-861 Enterprise Zones Montgomery County – Previously, WRAC sent a letter to the County Executive encouraging support of this bill. The bill would enable qualifying tenants, in addition to property owners, to be eligible to receive Enterprise Zone Property Tax Credits.

HB-1163 Enterprise Zone Designation – The bill permits the State to designate up to two zones per year within the same county. Previously, there could only be one designation per County per year.

HB471/SB285 Sustainable Communities Act of 2010 - This legislation serves to better coordinate several programs that are focused on revitalizing communities that have operated independently to achieve similar policy goals. These programs can be better coordinated to achieve investment in housing, historic preservation, economic and transportation development in existing neighborhoods and town centers. Mr. Klein indicated the state has provided for \$10 million in Tax Credits under this legislation.

HB 66 DHCD Microenterprise Financing – Mr. Klein explained that this bill authorizes the State Department of Housing & Community Development to create a \$1 million loan program for small businesses. Loans to businesses are capped at \$30,000.

HB 1182 Business Improvement District (BID) Formation – Mr. Klein indicated that BIDs are similar to the Urban Districts, which the County has designated for Silver Spring, Wheaton and Bethesda.

Subcommittee Reports

Planning & Visioning – Mr. Martin advised that the subcommittee met prior to the M-NCPPC's public forum on the Draft Sector Plan. The subcommittee expects to have the staff draft on May 28 to review and provide recommendations. The subcommittee has decided to undertake a compilation and synopsis of prior planning and visioning exercises which have occurred since WRAC was initiated in 2000. Mr. Baker commended the subcommittee for this decision indicating that it would benefit WRAC members, particularly more recent members who may not be familiar with previous efforts.

Project Review – Ms. Petersen commented that the April 29 subcommittee meeting went well, with good participation from committee members. As much of the meeting's content was addressed during the discussion of ZTA 10-04 (Agenda Item V), she had nothing more to add. She announced the May 27 Project Review meeting is cancelled and encouraged members to attend the June 7 Safeway public meeting, to be held at Crossway Communities. She advised that meeting would be the primary topic of discussion for the June Project Review Subcommittee meeting.

Economic Development – Mr. Fink advised that the subcommittee was following two tracks: reexamination of the Economic Development Toolkit, which had been the subcommittee's focus several months prior, and continued exploration of a Wheaton Market. Mr. Fink advised that a member of the County's Department of Economic Development would be discussing the toolkit at the June subcommittee meeting and the subcommittee would be working on ways to reinvigorate the implementation of the resources available, among Wheaton's small businesses. Mr. Fink advised that Sidney Cooper and Lindsay Johnson, the organizer of the Wheaton Flea Market, were present at the May subcommittee meeting and presented their perspectives on the successes and challenges of the Flea Market. Some members of WRAC commented that the mix of vendors and their offerings presents a challenge in increasing attendance.

It was noted that many items on display at the Flea Market could be found and purchased at a dollar store. Mr. Baker commented on several other public markets – Phoenix, AZ, Silver spring and Tacoma-Langley Crossroad that were successful and suggested that their elements of success be explored. He indicated that some of these markets operated as 501 c3 organizations. Mr. Fink added that engaging Wheaton’s civic associations might be another means of increasing attendance.

Green Wheaton – Mr. Klein commented that this work group, comprised of members of WRAC, WUDAC and environmentally concerned community members meets monthly and meetings are well attended, with 8-10 people at each meeting. At its May meeting the group focused on Costco, the proposed ZTA 10-04 and potential environmental trade-offs. The group’s suggestions for consideration were presented by Beth Chaisson, Group Chair, at the April 29 Project Review Subcommittee meeting which focused on the ZTA. Mr. Klein mentioned that that Green Wheaton had planted a rain garden on the greenspace in front of Parking Lot 13 and raised about \$600 to-date for its continued maintenance. Mr. Klein also advised that Green Wheaton had a booth at the Taste of Wheaton. The Group will meet with MCAB’s Land Use Committee next month.

Requests to Speak

- Karen Cordry, Kensington Heights (KH) community resident wished to comment on ZTA 10-04. She emphasized that the KH community is not opposed to Costco, but to its gas station. She emphasized that the Planning Board voted unanimously against a recommendation. Ms. Cordry emphasized that the ZTA would allow Costco to forgo demonstration of community need, which is part of the Special Exception process. She expressed concern that approval of such a ZTA would set a precedent for ZTAs that might follow which might put economic benefit over community protection.
- John Jenkins, Kensington Heights Community Association (KHCA) stated that community presence and Council reaction at the May 20 public hearing indicated the ZTA was “Dead”. He indicated the County was giving up leverage with Westfield and Costco by proposing and supporting the ZTA. Westfield should go for a Special Exception or come without a gas station.
- Danila Sheveiko indicated that discounted gas should not be chosen over WRAC’s mission to preserve exiting neighborhoods.

Meeting adjourned at 8:52.